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Some Philosophical

CONSIDERATIONS

Touching the *Being* of

WITCHES

AND

WITCHCRAFT.

WRITTEN

In a LETTER to the much Honour'd

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Royal Society.

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Some

CONSIDERATIONS

About

WITCHCRAFT,

In

A Letter to Robert Hunt *Esquire.*

SIR,

THE frequent and late dealings you have had in the *Examination* of *Witches*, and the Regards of one that hath a very particular Honour for you, have brought you the trouble of some *Considerations* on the *subject*, which *though* they are the careless and hasty products of a sitting, or two, may yet, I hope afford you some not unreasonable accounts of the odd *phænomena* of *Witchcraft* and *Fascination*, and contribute to the *Defence* of the Truth and certainly of Matters which you

know by *Experiments* that could not *deceive*, in spite of the *little exceptions* of those that are resolved to believe nothing in affairs of this nature.

And if any thing were to be much *admired* in an *Age* of *Wonders*, not onely of *Nature* (which is a *constant Prodigy*) but of *Men* and *Manners*; it would be to me matter of *Astonishment*, that *Men*, otherwise *witty* and *ingenious*, are fall'n into the conceit that there's *no such thing* as a *Witch* or *Apparition*, but that these are the *creatures* of *Melancholy* and *Superstition*, foster'd by *ignorance* and *design*; which, comparing the *confidence* of their *disbelief* with the *evidence* of the *things denied*, and the *weakness* of their *grounds*, would almost suggest, that themselves are an *argument* of what they *deny*: and that so confident an Opinion could not be held upon such inducements, but by some kind of *Witchcraft* and *Fascination* in the *Fancy*. And perhaps that *evil Spirit*, whose *influences* they will not allow in Actions ascribed to such Causes, hath a greater hand and interest in their *Proposition* than they are aware of. For that *subtil* Enemy of Mankind (since *Providence* will not permit him to mischief us without our own *concurrence*) attempts that by *stratagem* and *artifice*, which he could never

ver effect by *open* ways of acting; and the ſucceſs of all *wiles* depending upon their *ſecrecy* and *concealment*, his *influence* is never more *dangerous* than when his *agency* is leaſt *ſuſpected*. In order therefore to the carrying on the *dark* and *hidden deſigns* he manageth againſt our Happineſs, and our Souls, he cannot expect to advantage himſelf more, than by inſinuating a belief, *That there is no ſuch thing as himſelf*, but that *fear* and *fancy* make *Devils* now, as they did *Gods* of old. Nor can he ever draw the aſſent of men to ſo *dangerous* an aſſertion, while the *ſtanding ſenſible* evidences of his *exiſtence* in his practices by and upon his *Inſtruments* are not diſcredited and removed.

'Tis doubtleſs therefore the intereſt of this *Agent* of *darkneſs* to have the world believe, that the *notion* they have of him is but a *phantome* and conceit; and in order thereunto, That the ſtories of *Witches*, *Apparitions*, and indeed every thing that brings tidings of another world, are but *melancholick Dreams* and *pious Romances*. And when men are arriv'd thus far, to think there are no *diabolical contracts* or *apparitions*, their belief that there are ſuch *Spirits*, reſts onely upon their *Faith* and *Reverence* to the *Divine Oracles*, which

we have little reaſon to apprehend ſo great in ſuch aſſertors, as to command much from their aſſent, eſpecially in ſuch things in which they have *corrupt intereſts* againſt their *evidence.* So that he that thinks there is no *Witch*, believes a *Devil gratis*, or at leaſt upon ſuch inducements which he is like to find himſelf diſpoſed to deny when he pleaſeth. And when men are arrived to this degree of *diffidence* and *infidelity*, we are beholden to them if they believe either *Angel* or *Spirit*, *Reſurrection* of the *Body*, or *Immortality* of *Souls.* Theſe things hang together in a *Chain* of *connexion*, at leaſt in theſe mens *Hypotheſis*; and 'tis but an happy chance if he that hath loſt *one link* hold another. So that the vitals of Religion being ſo much interreſſed in this ſubject, it will not be impertinent particularly to diſcourſe it.

And in order to the proof that there have been, and are *unlawfull confederacies* with *evil ſpirits*, by vertue of which the *helliſh accomplices* perform things above their natural powers; I muſt premiſe, that this being *matter* of *Fact*, is only capable of the evidence of *authority* and *ſenſe*: And by both theſe, the being of *Witches* and *diabolical contracts*, is moſt abundantly confirm'd. All *Hiſtories* are

full

full of the exploits of thoſe *Inſtruments* of *darkneſs*, and the *teſtimony* of all *Ages*, not onely of the *rude* and *barbarous*, but of the moſt *civiliz'd* and *poliſh'd* world, brings tidings of their ſtrange performances. We have the *atteſtation* of thouſands of eye and ear-witneſſes, and thoſe not of the eaſily deceivable vulgar onely, but of wiſe and grave diſcerners, and that when no intereſt could oblige them to agree together in a common *Lie*: I ſay, we have the light of all theſe *circumſtances* to confirm us in the belief of things done by perſons of deſpicable power and knowledge, beyond the reach of *Art* and *ordinary Nature*; ſtanding publick *Records* have been kept of theſe well atteſted Relations, and *Epocha's* made of thoſe unwonted events. Laws in many Nations have been enacted againſt thoſe vile practiſes; *thoſe* among the *Jews* and our *own* are *notorious*; ſuch caſes have been often determined near us, by *wiſe* and *reverend Judges*, upon clear and convictive evidence: and thouſands in our own Nation have ſuffered death for their *vile compacts* with *apoſtate ſpirits*. All theſe I might largely prove in their particular inſtances, but that 'tis not needful, ſince thoſe that deny the being of *Witches*, do it not out of ignorance of theſe

Heads

Heads of Argument, of which probably they have heard a thouſand times, but from an *apprehenſion* that ſuch a *belief is abſurd*, and the things *impoſſible*. And upon theſe preſumptions they contemn all demonſtrations of this nature, and are hardned againſt conviction. And I think, thoſe that can believe all *Hiſtories* are *Romances*, that all the *wiſer* world have agreed together to *juggle* mankind into a common belief of *ungrounded fables*, that the *ſound ſenſes* of *multitudes* together may deceive them, and *Laws* are built upon *Chymera's*; that the *graveſt* and *wiſeſt Judges* have been *Murderers*, and the *ſageſt* perſons *Fools*, or *deſigning Impoſtors*: I ſay, thoſe that can believe this *heap* of abſurdities, are either more *credulous* than thoſe whoſe *credulity* they reprehend, or elſe have ſome *extraordinary evidence* of their perſwaſion, *viz. That 'tis abſurd and impoſſible there ſhould be a Witch or Apparition.* And I am confident, were thoſe *little appearances* remov'd, which men have form'd in their fancies againſt the *belief* of ſuch things, their *evidence* would make its way to their *aſſent*, without any more arguments than what they know already to enforce it. There is nothing then neceſſary to be done, in order to the eſtabliſhing the belief I would reconcile

reconcile to men's minds, but to endeavour the removal of those prejudices they have received against it, the chief of which I shall particularly deal with; and I begin with that *bold Assertion,* That

(1) *The* notion *of a* Spirit *is* impossible *and* contradictious, *and consequently so is that of* Witches, *the belief of which is founded on that Doctrine.*

To which *Objection* I *answer,* (1) If the *notion* of a *Spirit* be so *absurd* as is pretended, that of a *God,* and a *Soul, distinct* from *matter* and *immortal,* is likewise an *absurdity.* And then that the world was *jumbled* into this *elegant* and *orderly Fabrick* by *chance*; and that our *Souls* are onely *parts* of *Matter,* that came together we know not *whence,* nor *how*; and shall again shortly be *dissolv'd* into those *loose Atoms* that *compound* them; That all our *conceptions* are but the *thrusting* of one part of *matter* against another; and the *Idea's* of our minds meer *blind* and *casual motions*; These and a thousand more the grossest *impossibilities* and *absurdities,* consequents of this *Proposition, That the notion of a* Spirit *is absurd,* will be *sad certainties* and *demonstrations.* And with such

such Assertors I would cease to discourse about *Witches* and *Apparitions*, and address my self to obtain their assent to truths infinitely more Sacred.

And yet (2) though it should be granted them, that a *substance immaterial* is as much a *contradiction* as they can fancy; yet the *Air* and all the *Regions* above us may have their *invisible intellectual Agents*, of *nature* like unto our *Souls*, be *that* what it will; and some of them at least as much *degenerate* as the *vilest* and most *mischievous* among *Men*. This, I say, may reasonably enough be supposed, though, as I intimated above, the *Atheist* hath another *chain* of *consequences*. And this *Hypothesis* will be enough to secure the *possibility* of *Witches* and *Apparitions*: and that all the *upper Stories* of the *Universe* are furnish'd with *Inhabitants*, 'tis infinitely reasonable to conclude from the *analogy* of *Nature*: Since we see there is nothing so contemptible and vile in the world we reside in, but hath its living creatures that dwell upon it; the *Earth*, the *Water*, the *inferiour Air*; the *Bodies* of *Animals*, the *flesh*, the *skin*, the *entrails*; the *leaves*, the *roots*, the *stalks* of *Vegetables*; yea and all kind of *Minerals* in the *subterraneous Regions*: I say, all these have their *proper Inhabitants*; yea, I

suppose

ſuppoſe this Rule may hold in all diſtinct kinds of bodies in the world, That they have their *peculiar Animals*. The certainty of which I believe the improvement of *microſcopical obſervations* will diſcover. From whence I infer, That ſince this little *ſpot* is ſo *thickly peopled* in every *Atom* of it, 'tis weakneſs to think that all the *vaſt ſpaces* above, and *hollows* under ground, are *deſert* and *uninhabited*. And if both the *ſuperiour* and *lower Continents* of the *Univerſe* have their inhabitants alſo, 'tis exceedingly *improbable*, arguing from the ſame *analogy*, that they are all of the meer *ſenſible nature*, but that there are at leaſt ſome of the *Rational* and *Intellectual* Orders. Which ſuppoſed, there is good foundation for the belief of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, though the *notion* of a *Spirit* ſhould prove *abſurd* and *unphiloſophical*. And ſo this firſt Objection comes to nothing. I deſcend then to the ſecond *Prejudice*, which may be thus formed in behalf of the *Objectors*.

(2) *There are* Actions *in moſt of thoſe* Relations *aſcribed to* Witches, *which are* ridiculous *and* impoſſible *in the* nature *of* things; *ſuch are* (1) *their* flying *out of* windows, *after they have annointed themſelves, to remote places.* (2) *Their* transformation *into Cats, Hares, and other Creatures.* (3) *Their* feeling *all the* hurts *in their own*

bodies *which they have received in* theſe. (4) *Their* raiſing Tempeſts, *by muttering ſome nonſenſical words, or performing ſome little ridiculous ceremonies. And* (5) *their being* ſuck'd *in a certain private place of their* bodies *by a* Familiar. *Theſe are preſumed to be actions inconſiſtent with the nature of* Spirits, *and above the powers of thoſe poor and miſerable Agents. And therefore the* Objection *ſuppoſeth them performed only by the* fancy; *and that the whole* myſtery *of* Witchcraft *is but an* illuſion *of* craſie imagination.

But to this *Objection* I return, (1) in the general, The more *abſurd* and *unaccountable* theſe actions *ſeem*, the greater *confirmations* are they to me of the *truth* of thoſe *Relations*, and the *reality* of what the *Objectors* would deſtroy. For theſe circumſtances being exceeding *unlikely*, judging by the meaſures of common belief, 'tis the greater probability they are not *fictitious*; For the *contrivers* of *Fictions* uſe to form them as near as they can conformably to the moſt *unſuſpected realities*, endeavouring to make them look as *like truth* as is poſſible in the main *ſuppoſals*, though withal they make them ſtrange in the *circumſtance*. None but a fool or mad-man would relate with a purpoſe of having it believed, that he ſaw in *Ireland*, *Men* with *hoofs* on their *heads*, and *eyes* in their *poſteriors*;

riors; or, if any ſhould be ſo ridiculouſly vain, as to be ſerious in ſuch an *incredible Romance*, it cannot be ſuppoſed that all *Travellers* that come into thoſe parts after him ſhould tell the ſame ſtory. There is large *field* in *fiction*; and if all thoſe *Relations* were *arbitrary compoſitions*, doubtleſs the firſt *Romancers* would have framed them more agreeable to the common doctrine of *Spirits*; at leaſt, after theſe *ſuppoſed abſurdities* had been a thouſand times laugh'd at, people by this time would have learn'd to correct thoſe *obnoxious extravagancies*; and though they have not yet more *veracity* than the Ages of *Ignorance* and *Superſtition*, yet one would expect they ſhould have got more *cunning*. This ſuppos'd *impoſſibility* then of theſe performances, ſeems to me a *probable argument* that they are not wilful and deſigned forgeries. And if they are *Phancyes*, 'tis ſomewhat ſtrange that *Imagination* which is the moſt *various thing* in all the *world*, ſhould infinitely repeat the ſame *conceit* in all times and places.

But again (2) the *ſtrange Actions* related of *Witches*, and preſumed *impoſſible*, are not aſcribed to their own powers; but to the Agency of thoſe *wicked Confederates* they imploy: And to affirm that thoſe *evil ſpirits* cannot do that which we conceit *impoſſible*, is boldly to ſtint

the powers of Creatures, whose natures and faculties we know not, and to measure the *world* of *spirits* by the *narrow* rules of our own *impotent beings*. We see among our selves the performances of *some* out-go the *conceits* and *possibilities* of *others*; and we know many things may be done by the *Mathematicks*, and *Mechanick Artifice*, which common heads think *impossible* to be effected by the *honest* ways of *Art* and *Nature*. And doubtless the *subtilties* and *powers* of those *mischievous Fiends* are as much beyond the *reach* and *activities* of the most *knowing Agents* among us, as theirs are beyond the wit and ability of the most *rustick* and *illiterate*; So that the utmost that any man's reason in the world can amount to in this particular, is onely this, that he cannot *conceive* how such things can be performed; which onely argues the *weakness* and *imperfection* of our *knowledge* and *apprehensions*, not the *impossibility* of those performances; and we can no more from hence form an Argument against *them*, then against the most *ordinary effects* in *Nature*. We cannot conceive how the *Fœtus* is *form'd* in the *womb*, nor as much as how a *Plant* springs from the *Earth* we tread on; we know not how our *Souls* move the *Body*, nor how these *distant* and

extreme

extreme natures are *united*; And if we are *ignorant* of the moſt *obvious* things about us, and the moſt *conſiderable within* our ſelves, 'tis then no wonder that we know not the *conſtitution* and *powers* of the *Creatures*, to whom we are ſuch ſtrangers. Briefly then, *matters* of *fact* well proved ought not to be *denied*, becauſe we cannot *conceive* how they can be *perform'd*. Nor is it a reaſonable method of inference, firſt to *preſume* the thing *impoſſible*, and thence to conclude that the *fact* cannot be *proved*. On the contrary, we ſhould judge of the *action* by the *evidence*, and not the *evidence* by the *meaſures* of our *fancies* about the *action*. This is proudly to exalt our own *opinions* above the *cleareſt teſtimonies*, and moſt *ſenſible demonſtrations* of *fact*: and ſo to give the *Lie* to all *Mankind*, rather then diſtruſt the little *conceits* of our *bold imaginations*. But yet further,

(3.) I think there is nothing in the *inſtances* mention'd, but what may as well be accounted for the Rules of *Reaſon* and *Philoſophy* as the ordinary affairs of *Nature*. For in reſolving *natural Phænomena*, we can only aſſign the *probable cauſes*, ſhewing how things *may be*, not preſuming how they *are*. And in the particulars under our *Examen*, we may

give

give an account how 'tis *poſſible*, and not *unlikely*, that ſuch things (though ſomewhat varying from the common *rode* of *Nature*) may be acted. And if our narrow and contracted minds can furniſh us with apprehenſions of the way and manner of ſuch performances, though perhaps not the true ones, 'tis an argument that ſuch things may be effected by creatures, whoſe powers and knowledge are ſo vaſtly exceeding ours. I ſhall endeavour therefore briefly to ſuggeſt ſome things that may render the *poſſibility* of theſe performances *conceivable*, in order to the removal of this *Objection*, that they are *contradictions* and *impoſſible*.

For the *Firſt* then, That the *confederate Spirit* ſhould *tranſport* the *Witch* through the Air to the place of general *Rendezvous*, there is no difficulty in conceiving; and if that be true which great Philoſophers affirm concerning the real *ſeparability* of the *Soul* from the *Body* without *death*, there is yet *leſs*; for then 'tis eaſie to apprehend, that the *Soul*, having left its groſs and *ſluggiſh Body* behind it, and being cloath'd only with its *immediate vehicle* of *Air*, or more *ſubtile matter*, may be quickly conducted to any place it would be at, by thoſe *officious Spirits* that attend it.

And

And though I adventure to affirm nothing concerning the *truth* and *certainty* of this *ſuppoſition*, yet I muſt needs ſay, it doth not ſeem to me *unreaſonable*. And our experience of *Apoplexies*, *Epilepſies*, *Extaſies*, and the ſtrange things men report to have ſeen during thoſe *deliquiums*, look *favourably* upon this *conjecture*; which ſeems to me to contradict no *principle* of *Reaſon* or *Philoſophy*, ſince *Death* conſiſts not ſo much in the *actual ſeparation* of *Soul* and *Body*, as in the *indiſpoſition* and *unfitneſs* of the *Body* for *vital union*, as an excellent Philoſopher hath made good. On which *Hypotheſis*, the *Witches annointing* her ſelf before ſhe takes her flight, may perhaps ſerve to keep the Body *tenantable* & in fit *diſpoſition* to receive the *Spirit* at its return. Theſe things, I ſay, we may conceive, though I affirm nothing about them; and there is nothing in ſuch *conceptions* but what hath been affirm'd by men of worth and name, and may ſeem *fair* and *accountable* enough to thoſe who judge not altogether by the meaſures of the *popular* and *cuſtomary opinion*. And there's a ſaying of a great *Apoſtle* that ſeems to countenance this *Platonick opinion*; what is the meaning elſe of that expreſſion, [*Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell*] except the *Soul* may be *ſeparated* from the

Body

Body without *death*; which if it be granted *poſſible*, 'tis ſufficient for my purpoſe. And

(2) The *Transformations* of *Witches* into the *ſhapes* of other *Animals*, upon the ſame *ſuppoſal* is very *conceivable*, ſince then 'tis eaſie enough to imagin, that the *power* of *imagination* may form thoſe *paſsive* and *pliable vehicles* into thoſe *ſhapes*, with more eaſe then the *fancie* of the *Mother* can the ſtubborn *matter* of the *Fœtus* in the womb, as we ſee it frequently doth in the inſtances that occur of *Signatures* and *monſtrous Singularities*; And perhaps ſometimes the *confederate Spirit* puts *tricks* upon the *ſenſes* of the *ſpectators*, and thoſe *ſhapes* are onely *illuſions*.

But then (3) when they feel the *hurts* in their *groſs* bodies, that they receive in their *aëry vehicles*, they muſt be ſuppoſed to have been *really* preſent, at leaſt in theſe latter; and 'tis no more difficult to apprehend how the hurts of *thoſe* ſhould be tranſlated upon their *other bodies*, then how *diſeaſes* ſhould be *inflicted* by the *imagination*, or how the *fancy* of the *Mother* ſhould wound the *Fœtus*, as ſeveral credible relations do atteſt.

And (4) for their *raiſing ſtorms* and *tempeſts*, they do it not, be ſure, by their *own*, but by the *power* of the *Prince* of the *Air*, their *friend* and *allie*,

allie; and the *Ceremonies* that are injoin'd them, are doubtleſs nothing elſe but *entertainments* for their *imaginations*, and are likely deſign'd to perſuade them, that *they do* theſe ſtrange things *themſelves*.

And (laſtly) for their being *ſuck'd* by the *Familiar*, I ſay (1) we know ſo little of the nature of *Dæmons* and *Spirits*, that 'tis no wonder we cannot certainly divine the reaſon of ſo ſtrange an action. And yet (2) we may conjecture at ſome things that may render it leſs *improbable*. For ſome have thought that the *Genii* (whom both the *Platonical* and *Chriſtian Antiquity* thought *embodied*) are recreated by the *reeks* and *vapours* of *humane bloud* and the *ſpirits* that derive from them. Which ſuppoſal (if we grant them bodies) is not unlikely, every thing being *refreſh'd* and *nouriſh'd* by its like. And that they are not perfectly *abſtract* from all *body* and *matter*, beſides the reverence we owe to the wiſeſt antiquity, there are ſeveral conſiderable arguments I could alledge to render it exceeding probable. Which things ſuppoſed, the *Devil's ſucking* the *Sorcereſs* is no great wonder, nor difficult to be accounted for. Or perhaps (3) this may be onely a *diabolical Sacrament* and *Ceremony* to confirm the *helliſh covenant*. To which I adde, (4) That

which to me ſeems moſt *probable*, *viz.* Tha the *Familiar* doth not onely *ſuck* the *Witch*, but in the action infuſeth ſome *poiſonous ferment* into her, which gives her *imagination* and *ſpirits* a *magical tincture*, whereby they become *miſchievouſly influential*: and the word *venefica* intimates ſome ſuch matter. Now that the *imagination* hath a mighty power in *operation*, is ſeen in the juſt now mention'd *Signatures* and *Diſeaſes* that it cauſeth; and that the *fancy* is *modified* by the *qualities* of th *bloud* and *ſpirits*, is too evident to need proof: which things ſuppoſed, 'tis plain to conceive that the *evil ſpirit* having *breath'd* ſome *vile vapour* into the *body* of the *Witch*, it may *taint* her *bloud* and *ſpirits* with a *noxious quality*, by which her *infected imagination*, heightned by *melancholy*, and this *worſe cauſe*, may do much hurt upon *bodies* that are *impreſſive* by ſuch *influences*. And 'tis very likely that this *ferment* diſpoſeth the *imagination* of the *Sorcereſs* to cauſe the mentioned ἀφαιρεσία, or *ſeparation* of the *ſoul* from the *body*, and may perhaps keep the *body* in fit temper for *its re-entry*; as alſo it may facilitate *transformation*, which, it may be, could not be effected by *ordinary* and *unaſſiſted imagination*.

Thus we ſee 'tis not ſo deſperate to form an appre-

apprehenſion of the manner of theſe odde performances; and though they are not done the way I have deſcrib'd, yet what I have ſaid may help us to a conceit of the poſſibility, which ſufficeth for my purpoſe. And though the Hypotheſis I have gone upon will ſeem as unlikely to ſome, as the things they attempt to explain are to others, yet I muſt deſire their leave to ſuggeſt, that moſt things ſeem *unlikely* (eſpecially to the *conceited* and *opinionative*) at firſt *propoſal*; and many great *truths* are *ſtrange* and *improbable*, till *cuſtom* and *acquaintance* have reconciled them to our *fancies*. And I'le preſume to adde on this occaſion, (though I love not to be *confident* in *affirming*) that there is none of the *Platonical ſuppoſals* I have uſed, but what I could make appear to be *fair* and *reaſonable*, to the capable and unprejudic'd.

But I come (3) to another *prejudice* againſt the being of *Witches*, which is, That 'tis very improbable that the *Devil* who is a *wiſe* and *mighty ſpirit*, ſhould be at the beck of a poor *Hag*, and have ſo little to do as to attend the errands of the *impotent luſts* of a *ſilly old woman*.

To which I might anſwer, (1) That 'tis much more *improbable* that all the *world* ſhould be *deceiv'd* in *matters* of *fact*, and circumſtances

of the cleareſt evidence and conviction, than that the *Devil*, who is *wicked*, ſhould be alſo *unwiſe*; and that he that perſuades all his ſubjects and accomplices out of their wits, ſhould himſelf act like his own temptations and perſuaſions. In brief, there is nothing more ſtrange in this objection, than that *wickedneſs* is *baſeneſs* and *ſervility*, and that the *Devil* is at leiſure to ſerve thoſe he is at leiſure to tempt, and induſtrious to ruin. And again, (2) I ſee no *neceſsity* to believe that the *Devil* is always the *Witch's confederate*; but perhaps it may fitly be conſider'd, whether the *Familiar* be not ſome *departed humane ſpirit*, forſaken of God and goodneſs, and ſwallowed up by the unſatiable deſire of miſchief and revenge, which poſſibly by the *laws* and *capacity* of its *ſtate* it cannot execute *immediately*. And why we ſhould preſume that the *Devil* ſhould have the liberty of wandering up and down the Earth and Air, when he is ſaid to be *held* in the *chains* of *darkneſs*; and yet that the *ſeparated ſouls* of the *wicked*, of whom no ſuch thing is affirm'd in any *Sacred Record*, ſhould be thought ſo *impriſon'd*, that they cannot poſſibly wag from the place of their *confinement*, I know no ſhadow of conjecture. This *conceit* I'm confident hath prejudic'd many againſt the

the belief of *Witches* and *Apparitions*, they not being able to conceive that the *Devil* ſhould be ſo *ludricous* as *appearing ſpirits* are ſometimes reported to be in their *frolicks*; and they preſume, that *ſouls departed* never *re-viſit* the *free* and *open Regions*; which confidence I know nothing to juſtifie: For ſince *good* men in their *ſtate* of *ſeparation* are ſaid to be ἰσάγγελοι, why the *wicked* may not be ſuppoſed to be ἰσοδαίμονες in the worſt ſenſe of the word, I know nothing to help me to imagine. And if it be ſuppoſed that the *Imps* of *Witches* are ſometimes wicked *ſpirits* of our *own kind* and *nature*, and poſſibly the *ſame* that have been *Sorcerers* and *Witches* in this life: This ſuppoſal may give a fairer and more probable account of many of the actions of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*, than the other *Hypotheſis*, that they are always *Devils*. And to this conjecture I'l adventure to ſubjoyn another, which alſo hath its *probability*, *viz.* (3) That 'tis not impoſſible but that the *Familiars* of *Witches* are a *ſervile* kind of *ſpirits*, of a very *inferiour* conſtitution and nature, and none of thoſe that were once of the higheſt *Hierarchy*, now degenerated into the ſpirits we call *Devils*. And for my part I muſt confeſs, that I think the common *diviſion* of *ſpirits* much too *general*, conceiving it likely there

there may be as great a *variety* of *Intellectual* creatures in the *invisible* world, as there is of *Animals* in the *visible*: and that all the *superiour*, yea, and *inferiour* Regions, have their several kinds of *spirits*, differing in their *natural perfections*, as well as in the *kinds* and *degrees* of their *depravities*; which being supposed, 'tis very probable that those of the *baseſt* and *meaneſt* Orders are they, who submit to the mention'd *servilities*. And thus the *sageſs* and *grandeur* of the *Prince* of *darkneſs* need not be brought into queſtion.

But (4) the opinion of *Witches* seems to some to accuſe *Providence*, and to ſuggeſt that it hath expoſed *Innocents* to the *fury* and *malice* of *revengeful Fiends*; yea, and ſuppoſeth *thoſe* moſt *obnoxious*, for whom we might moſt reaſonably expect a more ſpecial *tutelary* care and protection, moſt of the cruel practices of thoſe preſum'd *Inſtruments* of *Hell* being upon *Children*, who as they leaſt deſerve to be deſerted by that *Providence* that *ſuperintends* all things, ſo they moſt need its *guardian influence*.

To this ſo ſpecious an *Objection* I have theſe things to anſwer. (1) *Providence* is a *Deep unfathomable*; and if we ſhould not believe the

Phœnomena

Phœnomena of our *ſenſes*, before we can reconcile them to our *notions* of *Providence*, we muſt be groſſer *Scepticks* than ever yet was extant. The *miſeries* of the *preſent life*, the *unequal diſtributions* of *good* and *evil*, the *ignorance* and *barbarity* of the greateſt part of mankind, the *fatal diſadvantages* we are all under, and the *hazard* we run of being eternally miſerable and undone; theſe, I ſay, are things that can hardly be made *conſiſtent* with that *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* that we are ſure hath *made*, and *mingled* it ſelf with all things. And yet we believe there is a *beauty* and *harmony*, and *goodneſs* in that *Providence*, though we cannot *unriddle* it in *particular inſtances*; nor, by reaſon of our ignorance and imperfection, clear it from *contradicting appearances*; and conſequently, we ought not to deny the being of *Witches* and *Apparations*, becauſe they will create us ſome difficulties in our *notions* of *Providence*. But to come more cloſe, (2) Thoſe that believe that *Infants* are *Heirs* of *Hell* & *Children* of the *Devil* as ſoon as they are *diſcloſed* to the world, cannot certainly offer ſuch an objection; for what is a little *trifling pain* of a moment, to thoſe *eternal tortures*, to which, if they *die as ſoon* as they are *born*, according to the tenour of this Doctrin, they are *everlaſtingly expoſed*? But however the caſe

caſe ſtands as to *that*, 'tis certain, (3) That *Providence* hath not ſecur'd them from other *violences* they are obnoxious to from *cruelty* and *accident*; and yet we accuſe *It* not when a whole Townful of *Innocents* fall a *Victim* to the *rage* and *ferity* of *barbarous executioners* in wars and *Maſſacres*. To which I adde, (4) That 'tis likely the *miſchief* is not ſo often done by the *evil ſpirit immediately*, but by the *malignant* influence of the *Sorcereſs*, whoſe *power* of hurting conſiſts in the fore-mention'd *ferment*, which is *infuſed* into her by the *Familiar*. So that I am apt to think there may be a *power* of *real faſcination* in the *Witch's eyes* and *imagination*, by which for the moſt part ſhe acts upon *tender* bodies. *Neſcio quis teneros oculus*---- For the *peſtilential ſpirits* being darted by a *ſprightful* and *vigorous imagination* from the *eye*, and meeting with *thoſe* that are *weak* and *paſſive* in the bodies which they enter, will not fail to *infect* them with a *noxious quality*, that makes *dangerous* and *ſtrange alterations* in the perſon invaded by this *poyſonous influence*: which way of acting by *ſubtil* and *inviſible inſtruments* is *ordinary* and *familiar* in all natural *efficiencies*. And 'tis now paſt queſtion, that *nature* for the moſt part acts by *ſubtil ſtreams* and *aporhæa's* of *minute particles*, which paſs from one body to another.

another. Or however that be, this kind of *agency* is as *conceivable* as any of thoſe *qualities ignorance* hath call'd *ſympathy* and *antipathy*, the *reality* of which we *doubt* not, though the *manner* of *action* be *unknown*. Yea, the thing I ſpeak of is as eaſie to be apprehended, as how *infection* ſhould paſs in certain *tenuious ſtreams* through the *air* from one houſe to another; or, as how the *biting* of a *mad Dog* ſhould fill all the *bloud* and *ſpirits* with a *venomous* and *malign ferment*; the application of the *vertue* doing the ſame in our caſe, as *that* of *contract* doth in *this*. Yea, ſome kinds of *faſcination* are perform'd in this groſſer and more ſenſible way, as by *ſtriking*, giving *Apples*, and the like, by which the *contagious quality* may be tranſmitted, as we ſee *diſeaſes* often are by the *touch*. Now in this way of conjecture, a good account may be given why *Witches* are moſt *powerful* upon *Children* & *timorous* perſons, *viz.* becauſe their *ſpirits* and *imaginations* being *weak* and *paſſive*, are not able to reſiſt the *fatal invaſion*; whereas men of *bold* minds, who have plenty of *ſtrong* and *vigorous ſpirits* are ſecure from the *contagion*, as in *peſtilential Airs clean* bodies are not ſo liable to infection as are other tempers. Thus then we ſee 'tis likely enough that very often the *Sorcereſs* her ſelf doth the *miſchief*; and we know,

de facto, that *Providence* doth not always ſecure us from one another's *injuries*. And yet I muſt confeſs, that many times alſo the evil *ſpirit* is the *miſchievous Agent*; though this confeſſion draw on me another objection, which I next propoſe.

(5) Then it may be ſaid, that if *wicked ſpirits* can hurt us by the *direction*, and at the deſire of a *Witch*, one would think they ſhould have the ſame power to do us injury without *inſtigation* or *compact*; and if this be granted, 'tis a wonder that we are not always annoi'd and infeſted by them. To which

I return, (1) That the *laws*, *liberties* and *reſtraints* of the *inhabitants* of the other *world* are to us utterly *unknown*; and this way we can only argue our ſelves into *confeſſions* of our *ignorance*, which every man muſt acknowledg that is not as *immodeſt* as *ignorant*. It muſt be granted by all that own the *being*, *power* and *malice* of *evil ſpirits*, that the *ſecurity* we enjoy is *wonderful*, whether they act by *Witches* or not; and by what *Laws* they are kept from making us a prey, to ſpeak like *Philoſophers*, *we cannot tell*: yea, why they ſhould be permitted to tempt and ruine us in our *Souls*, and reſtrain'd from touching or hurting us in our *Bodies*, is a

myſtery

myſtery not eaſily *accountable*. But yet (2) though we acknowledge their power to vex and torment us in our bodies alſo, yet a reaſon may be given why they are leſs frequent in this kind of miſchief, *viz.* becauſe their main deſigns are levell'd againſt the intereſt and happineſs of our Souls, which they can beſt promote, when their actions are moſt *ſly* and *ſecret*; whereas did they ordinarily perſecute men in their bodies, their *agency* and *wicked influence* would be diſcover'd, and make a mighty noiſe in the world, whereby men would be awaken'd to a more ſuitable and vigorous oppoſition, by the uſe of ſuch means as would engage *Providence* to reſcue them from their *rage* and *cruelties*, & at laſt defeat them in their great purpoſes of *undoing* us *eternally*. Thus we may conceive that the *ſecurity* we enjoy may well enough *conſiſt* with the *power* and *malice* of thoſe *evil ſpirits*; and upon this account we may ſuppoſe that *Laws* of their own may prohibit their *unlicens'd injuries*, not from any *goodneſs* there is in their *Conſtitutions*, but in order to the more *ſucceſsful* carrying on the *projects* of the *dark Kingdom*; as *Generals* forbid *plunder*, not out of *love* to their Enemies, but in order to their own *ſucceſs*. And hence (3) we may ſuppoſe a *Law* of *permiſſion* to hurt

us at the instance of the *Sorceress*, may well stand with the *polity* of *Hell*, since by gratifying the wicked person they encourage her in *malice* and *revenge*, and promote thereby the main ends of their *black confederacy*, which are to propagate *wickedness*, and to ruine us in our *eternal interests*. And yet (4) 'tis clear to those that believe the *History* of the *Gospel*, that *wicked spirits* have vexed the bodies of men, without any *instigation* that we read of; and at this day 'tis very likely that many of the *strange accidents* and *diseases* that befall us, may be the *infliction* of *evil spirits*, prompted to hurt us only by the delight they take in *mischief*. So that we cannot argue the improbability of their hurting *Children* and others by *Witches*, from our own *security* and *freedom* from the *effects* of their *malice*, which perhaps we feel in more instances than we are aware of.

But (6) another *prejudice* against the *belief* of *Witches*, is, a presumption upon the *enormous force* of *melancholy* and *imagination*, which without doubt can do *wonderful* things, and beget *strange* persuasions; and to these causes some ascribe the presum'd effects of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*. To which I reply briefly, and yet I hope sufficiently;

(1) That

(1) That to reſolve all the *clear* circumſtances of *fact*, which we find in well atteſted and confirm'd Relations of this kind, into the power of *deceivable imagination*, is to make *fancy* the greater *prodigy*, and to ſuppoſe, that it can do *ſtranger feats* than are believed of any other kind of *faſcination*. And to think that *Pins* and *Nails*, for inſtance, can, by the *power* of *imagination* be convey'd within the skin, or that *imagination*, ſhould deceive ſo many as have been witneſſes in *objects* of *ſenſe*, in all the circumſtances of *diſcovery*; this, I ſay, is to be infinitely more *credulous* than the aſſertors of *Sorcery* and *Demoniack contracts*. And by the ſame reaſon it may be believ'd, that all the *Battels* and *ſtrange events* of the world, which our ſelves have not ſeen, are but *dreams* and fond *imaginations*, and like thoſe that are fought in the *clouds*, when the *brains* of the *deluded ſpectators* are the onely *Theatre* of thoſe *fancied tranſactions*. And (2) to deny evidence of *fact*, becauſe *their imagination may* deceive the *Relators*, when we have no reaſon to think *ſo* but a bare preſumption, that there is no ſuch thing as is related, is quite to deſtroy the credit of all *humane teſtimony*, and to make *all men liars* in a larger ſenſe than the *Prophet* concluded in his haſte. For not onely the *melancholick*

cholick and the *fanciful*, but the *grave* and the ſober, whoſe judgments we have no reaſon to ſuſpect to be tainted by their *imaginations*, have from their own knowledge and experience made reports of this nature. But to this it will poſſibly be rejoyn'd, the *Reply* will be another *prejudice* againſt the belief I contend for, *viz.*

(7) That 'tis a ſuſpicious circumſtance that *Witchcraft* is but a *fancy*, ſince the perſons that are accuſed are commonly *poor* and *miſerable old Women*, who are overgrown with *diſcontent* and *melancholy*, which are very *imaginative*; and the perſons ſaid to be *bewitch'd* are for the moſt part *Children*, or people very weak, who are eaſily impoſed upon, and are apt to receive *ſtrong impreſſions* from nothing: whereas were there any ſuch thing really, 'tis not likely, but that the more *cunning* and *ſubtil deſperado's*, who might the more ſucceſsfully carry on the *miſchievous deſigns* of the *dark Kingdom*, ſhould be oftner engaged in thoſe *black confederacies*, and alſo one would expect effects of the *helliſh combination* upon others than the *innocent* and the *ignorant*.

To which *Objection* it might perhaps be enough to return (as hath been above ſuggeſted) that nothing can be concluded by this

and

and ſuch like arguings, but that the *policy* and *menages* of the *inſtruments* of *darkneſs* are to us altogether *unknown*, and as much in the *dark* as their natures, mankind being no more acquainted with the *reaſons* and *methods* of action in the other world, than poor *Cottagers* and *Mechanicks* are with the *intriques* of *Government* and *reaſons* of *State*. Yea peradventure (2) 'tis one of the great *deſigns*, as 'tis certainly the *intereſt*, of thoſe wicked *Agents* and *Machinators*, induſtriouſly to hide from us their *influences* and *ways* of acting, and to work, as near as is *poſſible*, *incognito*; upon which ſuppoſal 'tis eaſie to conceive a reaſon, why they moſt commonly work by, and upon the weak and the ignorant, who can make no *cunning obſervations*, or tell *credible tales* to *detect* their *artifice*. Beſides (3) 'tis likely a *ſtrong imagination*, that cannot be *weaken'd* or *diſturb'd* by a *buſie* and *ſubtil ratiocination*, is a neceſſary requiſite to thoſe wicked performances; and without doubt an *heightned* and *obſtinate fancy* hath a great influence upon *impreſſive ſpirits*; yea, and as I have conjectur'd before, on the more *paſſive* and *ſuſceptible bodies*. And I am very apt to believe, that there are as *real communications* and *intercourſes* between our *ſpirits*, as there are between *material agents*; which *ſecret influences*,

though

though they are *unknown* in their *nature*, and *ways of acting*, yet they are ſufficiently *felt* in their *effects*: for *experience* atteſts, that *ſome* by the very *majeſty* and *greatneſs* of their *ſpirits*, diſcover'd by nothing but a certain *noble air* that accompanies them, will *bear down* others *leſs great* and *generous*, and make them *ſneak* before them; and ſome, by I know not what *ſtupifying vertue*, will tie up the *tongue*, and confine the *ſpirits* of thoſe who are otherwiſe *bright* and *voluble*. Which thing ſuppoſed, the *influences* of a *ſpirit* poſſeſs'd of an *active* and *enormous imagination*, may be *malign* and *fatal* where they cannot be reſiſted, eſpecially when they are accompanied by thoſe *poiſonous reaks* that the *evil ſpirit* breaths into the *Sorcereſs*, which likely are *ſhot* out, and *applied* by a *fancy* heightned and prepared by *melancholy* and *diſcontent*. And thus we may conceive why the *melancholick* and *envious* are uſed upon ſuch occaſions, and for the ſame reaſon the *ignorant*, ſince *knowledge* checks and controls *imagination*; and thoſe that abound much in the *imaginative faculties* do not uſually exceed in the *rational*. And perhaps (4) the *Dæmon* himſelf uſeth the *imagination* of the *Witch* ſo *qualified* for his purpoſe, even in thoſe actions of miſchief which are more properly *his*; for it is moſt probable, that

that *spirits* act not upon *bodies immediately*, and by their *naked essence*, but by *means proportionate* and suitable in *instruments* that they use; upon which account likely 'tis so strictly required, that the *Sorceress* should believe, that so her *imagination* might be more at the *devotion* of the *mischievous Agent*. And for the same reason also *Ceremonies* are used in *Inchantments*, *viz.* for the begetting this *diabolical faith*, and heightning the *fancy* to a degree of *strength* and *vigour* sufficient to make it a fit *instrument* for the design'd performance. And these I think are reasons of likelihood and probability, why the *hellish confederates* are mostly the *ignorant* and the *melancholick*. To pass then to another prejudice.

(8) The frequent *impostures* that are met with in this kind, beget in some a belief, that all such *relations* are *forgeries* and *tales*; and if we urge the evidence of a *story* for the belief of *Witches* or *Apparitions*, they will produce two as *seemingly strong* and *plausible*, which shall conclude in *mistake* or *design*; inferring thence, that all others are of the same quality and credit. But such arguers may please to consider,

(1) That a *single relation* for an *Affirmative*, sufficiently confirmed and attested, is worth a

thousand *tales* of *forgery* and *imposture*, from whence cannot be concluded an *universal negative*. So that, though all the *Objectors stories* be *true*, and an hundred times as many more such *deceptions*; yet one *relation*, wherein no *fallacy* or *fraud* could be suspected for our *Affirmative*, would spoil any *Conclusion* could be erected on them. And

(2) It seems to me a belief sufficiently *bold* and *precarious*, that *all* these *relations* of *forgery* and *mistake* should be certain, and not *one* in *millions* of those which attest the *affirmative reality*, with circumstances as good as could be expected, or wish'd, should be *true*, but all *fabulous* and *vain*. And *they* have no reason to object *credulity* to the assertors of *Sorcery* and *Witchcraft*, that can swallow so large a morsel. And I desire such Objectors to consider,

(1) Whether it be fair to infer, that because there are some *Cheats* and *Impostures*, that therefore there are no *Realities*. Indeed frequency of *deceit* and *fallacy* will warrant a greater care and caution in *examining*, and *scrupulosity* and *shiness* of *assent* to things wherein *fraud* hath been *practised*, or may in the least degree be *suspected*. But, to conclude, because that an old woman's *fancy* abused her, or some *knavish* fellows

fellows put *tricks* upon the *ignorant* and the *timorous*, that therefore whole *Aſſiſes* have been a thouſand times deceived in *judgments* upon *matters* of *fact*, and numbers of ſober perſons have been *forſworn* in things wherein *perjury* could not advantage them; I ſay, ſuch *inferences* are as *void* of *reaſon*, as they are of *charity* and *good manners*.

But it may be ſuggeſted further, (9) That it cannot be imagin'd what *deſign* the *Devil* ſhould have in making thoſe *ſolemn compacts*, ſince perſons of ſuch debauch'd and irreclaimable diſpoſitions as thoſe with whom he is ſuppoſed to *confederate*, are pretty ſecurely *his*, antecedently to the bargain, and cannot be more *ſo* by it, ſince they cannot put their *ſouls* out of *poſſibility* of the *Divine Grace* but by the *Sin* that is *unpardonable*; or, if they could ſo diſpoſe and give away themſelves, it will to ſome ſeem very unlikely, that a great and mighty *Spirit* ſhould oblige himſelf to ſuch obſervances, and keep ſuch a-do to ſecure the ſoul of a ſilly body, which 'twere odds but it would be *His* though *He* put himſelf to no further trouble than that of his *ordinary temptations*.

To which *ſuggeſtions* 'twere enough to ſay, that 'tis ſufficient if the *thing* be well *prov'd*,

though the *design* be not *known*. And to argue *negatively à fine*, is very unconclusive in such matters. The Laws and affairs of the other world (as hath been intimated) are vastly differing from those of our Regions, and therefore 'tis no wonder we cannot judge of their *designs*, when we know *nothing* of their *menages*, and so *little* of their *natures*. The ignorant *looker-on* can't imagine what the *Limner* means by those seemingly *rude lines* and *scrawls* which *he* intends for the *rudiments* of a *Picture*; and the *Figures* of *Mathematick Operation* are *non-sense*, and *dashes* at *a venture* to one uninstructed in *Mechanicks*. We are in the dark to *one another's* purposes & intendments; and there are a thousand intrigues in our little matters, which will not presently confess their design even to *sagacious inquisitors*. And therefore 'tis folly and incogitancy to argue any thing one way or other from the *designs* of a sort of Beings, with whom we so little communicate; and possibly we can take no more aim or guess at their *projects* and *designments*, than the *gazing Beasts* can do at ours, when they see the *Traps* and *Gins* that are laid for them, but understand nothing what they mean. Thus in general.

But I attempt something more particularly, in order to which I must premise that the

Devil

Devil is a name for a *Body Politick*, in which there are very different *Orders* and *Degrees* of *Spirits*, and perhaps in as much *variety* of *place* and *ſtate*, as among our ſelves; ſo that 'tis not one and the ſame perſon that makes all the compacts with thoſe abuſed and ſeduced Souls, but they are divers, and *thoſe* 'tis like of the meaneſt and baſeſt quality in the *Kingdom of darkneſs*; which being ſuppoſed, I offer this account of the *probable deſign* of thoſe *wicked Agents*, *viz.* That having none to *rule* or *tyrannize* over within the *Circle* of their own nature and government, they affect a *proud Empire* over us (the deſire of *Dominion* and *Authority* being largely ſpread through the whole *circumference* of *degenerated nature*, eſpecially among thoſe, whoſe *pride* was their *original tranſgreſſion*) every one of theſe then deſires to get him Vaſſals to pay him homage, and to be emploied like Slaves in the ſervices of his luſts and appetites; to gratifie which deſire, 'tis like enough to be provided and allowed by the *conſtitution* of their *State* and *Government*, that every *wicked ſpirit* ſhall have thoſe Souls as his *property*, and *particular ſervants* and *attendants*, whom he can *catch* in ſuch *compacts*, as thoſe *wild Beaſts* that we can take in *hunting*, are by the allowance of the Law

our.

our *own*; and those Slaves that a man hath *purchas'd*, are his peculiar goods, and the vassals of his will. Or rather those deluding Fiends are like the seducing fellows we call *Spirits*, who inveigle Children by their false and flattering promises, and carry them away to the *Plantations* of *America*, to be servilly emploied there in the works of *their* own profit and advantage. And as those base Agents will humour and flatter the simple unwary Youth, till they are on Ship-board, and without the reach of those that might rescue them from their hands: In like manner the more *mischievous Tempter* studies to gratifie, please, and accommodate to those he deals with in this kind, till death hath lanch'd them into the *Deep*, and they are past the danger of *Prayers*, *Repentance*, and *Endeavours*; and then *He* useth them as pleaseth *Him*. This account I think is not unreasonable, and 'twill fully answer the Objection. For though the matter be not as I have conjectur'd, yet 'twill suggest a way how it may be *conceiv'd*, which nulls the pretence, That the *Design* is *inconceiveable*.

But then we are still liable to be question'd, (10) how it comes about, that those *proud* and *insolent Designers* practise in this kind

kind upon ſo *few*, when one would expect, that they ſhould be ſtill trading this way, and everywhere be driving on the project, which the vileneſs of men makes ſo feiſable, and would ſo much ſerve the intereſt of their luſts.

To which, among other things that might be ſuggeſted, I return, (1) That we are never liable to be ſo betraied and abuſed, till by our *vile diſpoſitions* and *tendencies* we have forfeited the *tutelary* care and *overſight* of the better Spirits; which, though generally they are our *guard* and *defence* againſt the malice and violence of *evil Angels*, yet it may well enough be thought that ſometimes they may take their leave of ſuch as are ſwallowed up by *malice*, *envy*, and *deſire* of *revenge*, qualities moſt contrary to their *Life* and *Nature*, and leave them expoſed to the *invaſion* and *ſollicitations* of thoſe *wicked Spirits*, to whom ſuch *hateful Attributes* make them very *ſuitable*. And if there be particular *guardian* Angels, as 'tis not abſurd to fancy, it may then well be ſuppoſed, that no man is obnoxious to thoſe projects and attempts, but only ſuch whoſe *vile* and *miſchievous natures* have driven from them their *protecting Genius*. And againſt this

dereliction

dereliction to the power of *evil ſpirits*, 'tis likely enough what ſome affirm, that the *Royal Pſalmiſt* directs that Prayer, *Pſal.* 71. 9, 10. *Caſt me not off in the time of old age, forſake me not when my ſtrength faileth.* For---- *They that keep my ſoul* [φυλάσσοντες τὴν ψυχήν μου, as the *LXX* and the *Vulgar Latin*, *Qui cuſtodiunt animam meam*] *they take counſel together, ſaying, God hath forſaken him, perſecute him and take him, for there is none to deliver him.* But I adde, (2) That 'tis very probable, that the ſtate wherein they are, will not eaſily permit *palpable intercourſes* between the *bad Genii* and *our nature*, ſince 'tis like enough that their own Laws and Government do not allow their frequent excurſions into this world. Or, it may with as great probability be ſuppoſed, that 'tis a very hard and painful thing for them, to force their *thin* and *tenuious* bodies into a *viſible conſiſtence*, and ſuch ſhapes as are neceſſary for their *deſigns* in their *correſpondencies* with *Witches*. For in this action their bodies muſt needs be exceedingly *compreſs'd*, which cannot be well ſuppoſed without a painful ſenſe. And this is perhaps a reaſon why there are ſo *few Apparitions*, and why *appearing ſpirits* are commonly in ſuch haſte to be gone, *viz.* that they

they may be deliver'd from the *unnatural preſſure* of their *tender Vehicles*, which I confeſs holds more in the *apparitions* of *good* than of *evil Spirits*, moſt Relations of this kind, deſcribing their diſcoveries of themſelves, as very *tranſient*, (though for thoſe the Holy Scripture records, there may be peculiar Reaſons why they are not *ſo*) whereas the *wicked ones* are not altogether ſo *quick* and *haſty* in their *Viſits*: The reaſon of which probably is, the great *ſubtilty* and *tenuity* of the bodies of the former, which will require far greater degrees of *compreſſion*, and conſequently of *pain*, to make them *viſible*; whereas the latter, are more *fœculent* and *groſs*, and ſo nearer allyed to *palpable conſiſtencies*, and more eaſily reduceable to *appearance* and *viſibility*.

At this turn, Sir, you may perceive that I have again made uſe of the *Platonick Hypotheſis*, *That Spirits are Embodyed*, upon which indeed a great part of my Diſcourſe is grounded: And therefore I hold my ſelf obliged to a ſhort account of that ſuppoſal. It ſeems then to me very *probable* from the Nature of *Senſe*, and *Analogie* of *Nature* For (1.) We perceive in our ſelves, that all *Senſe* is caus'd and excited by *motion* made in *matter*; And when thoſe *motions* which convey *ſenſible impreſſions* to the

Brain, the *Seat* of *Sense*, are intercepted, Sense is lost: So that, if we suppose *Spirits* perfectly to be *disjoyn'd* from all *matter*, 'tis not conceivable how they can have the sense of any thing: For how *material Objects* should any way be perceiv'd, or felt without *vital union* with *matter*, 'tis not possible to imagine. Nor doth it (2.) seem suitable to the *Analogie* of *Nature*, which useth not to make *precipitious leaps* from one thing to another, but usually proceeds by *orderly steps* and *gradations*: whereas were there no *order* of *Beings* between *us*, who are so deeply plunged into the grossest matter, and pure unbodied Spirits, 'twere a mighty *jump* in Nature. Since then the greatest part of the World consists of the *finer* portions of matter, and our own Souls are *immediately united* unto *these*, 'tis infinitely probable to conjecture, that the nearer orders of Spirits are *vitally joyn'd* to such *Bodies*. And so *Nature* by *Degrees* ascending still by the more *refin'd* and *subtile* matter, gets at last to the pure Νόες or *immaterial minds*, which the *Platonists* made the *highest Order* of *created Beings*. But of this I have discoursed else-where, and have said thus much of it at present, because it will enable me to add another Reason of the *unfrequency* of *Apparitions* and *Compacts*, *viz.*

(3.) Be-

(3.) Becauſe 'tis very likely, that *theſe Regions* are very *unſuitable*, and *diſproportion'd* to the *frame* and *temper* of their *Senſes* and *Bodies*; ſo that perhaps, the *Courſer Spirits* can no more bear the *Air* of our World, then *Batts* and *Owls* can the brighteſt beams of Day. Nor can the *Purer* and *Better* any more endure the *noyſom ſteams*, and *poyſonous reeks* of this *Dunghil Earth*, then the *Delicate* can bear a confinement in *naſty Dungeons*, and the foul *ſquallid Caverns* of uncomfortable Darkneſs So that 'tis no more wonder, that the better Spirits no oftner appear, than that men are not more frequently in the *Dark Hollows* under ground. Nor is't any more ſtrange that *evil Spirits* ſo rarely viſit us, then that *Fiſhes* do not ordinarily fly in the Air, as 'tis ſaid one ſort of them doth; or that we ſee not the Batt daily fluttering in the beams of the Sun. And now by the help of what I have ſpoken under this Head, I am provided with ſome things wherewith to diſable another Objection, which I thus propoſe:

(XI.) *If there be ſuch an intercourſe between* Evil Spirits *and the* Wicked, *how comes it about that there is no correſpondence between* Good Spirits *and the* Vertuous? *ſince without doubt*, theſe *are as deſirous to propagate the Spirit and Deſignes of the upper and better World, as* thoſe *are*

to promote the Intereſt of the Kingdom *of* Darkneſs.

Which way of arguing is ſtill from our *Ignorance* of the *State* and *Government* of the other World, which *muſt* be *confeſt*, and *may*, without prejudice to the *Propoſition* I defend. But particularly, I ſay, (1.) That we have ground enough to believe, that *Good Spirits* do interpoſe in, yea, and *govern* our Affairs. For that there is a *Providence* reaching from Heaven to Earth, is generally acknowledg'd; but that *this* ſuppoſeth all things to be order'd by the *immediate influence*, and *interpoſal* of the *Supreme Deity*, is not very *Philoſophical* to ſuppoſe; ſince if we judge by the *Analogie* of the *Natural World*, all things we ſee are carried on by the *Miniſtry* of *Second Cauſes*, and *intermediate Agents*. And it doth not ſeem ſo *Magnificent* and *Becoming* an apprehenſion of the *Supreme Numen*, to phancy His *immediate Hand* in every *trivial* Management. But 'tis exceeding likely to conjecture, that much of the *Government* of us, and our Affairs, is committed to the *better Spirits*, with a due *ſubordination* and *ſubſerviency* to the Will of the chief *Rector* of the *Univerſe*. And 'tis not abſurd to believe, that there is a *Government* runs from *Higheſt* to *Loweſt*, the *better* and more *perfect* orders of Being, ſtill ruling

ling the *inferiour* and *leſs perfect.* So that ſome one would phancy that perhaps the *Angels* may manage *us*, as we do the *Creatures* that God and Nature have placed under our *Empire* and *Dominion.* But however that is, That *God* rules the lower World by the *Miniſtry* of *Angels*, is very conſonant to the *ſacred Oracles.* Thus, *Deut.*XXXII.viii,ix.*When the Moſt High divided the Nations their inheritance, when he ſeparated the ſons of Adam, he ſet the bounds of the people,* Κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων θεῦ, *according to the number of the Angels of God,* as the *Septuagint* renders it; the Authority of which Tranſlation, is abundantly credited and aſſerted, by its being quoted in the New Teſtament, without notice of the *Hebrew* Text, even there where it differs from it, as learned men have obſerv'd. We know alſo, that *Angels* were very *familiar* with the *Patriarchs* of old; and *Jacob's Ladder* is a *Myſtery*, which imports their *miniſtring* in the affairs of the Lower World. Thus *Origen* and others underſtand, that to be ſpoken by the *Preſidential Angels*, Jer. LI. ix. *We would have healed* BABYLON, *but ſhe is not healed, forſake her, and let us go.* Like the Voyce heard in the *Temple* before the taking of *Jeruſalem* by *Titus*, Μεταβαίνωμεν ἔντευθεν. And before *Nebuchadnezzar* was ſent to learn Wiſdome and Religion among the Beaſts, *He*

ſees

ſees a *Watcher*, according to the 70. an *Angel*, and an *holy One come down from heaven*, Dan. IV. xiii. who pronounceth the *ſad Decree* againſt *Him*, and calls it the *Decree* of the *Watchers*, who very probably were the *Guardian Genii* of *Himſelf* and his *Kingdome*. And that there are *particular* Angels that have the ſpecial *Rule* and *Government* of particular *Kingdomes*, *Provinces*, *Cities*, yea and of *Perſons*, I know nothing that can make improbable: The inſtance is notorious in *Daniel*, of the *Angels* of *Perſia* and *Græcia*, that hindred the other that was engaged for the concerns of *Judæa*; yea, our Saviour Himſelf tells us, that *Children have their Angels*, and the Congregation of Diſciples ſuppoſed that St. *Peter* had *his*. Which things, if they be granted, the good Spirits have not ſo little to do with us, and our matters, as is generally believed. And perhaps it would not be abſurd, if we referr'd many of the *ſtrange thwarts*, and *unexpected events*, the *diſappointments* and *lucky coincidences* that befal us, the *unaccountable fortunes* and *ſucceſſes* that attend ſome *lucky* men, and the *unhappy fates* that dog others that ſeem born to be *miſerable*; the *Fame* and *Favour* that ſtill waits on ſome without any conceivable *motive* to allure it, and the *general neglect* of others more *deſerving*, whoſe *worth* is not *acknowledg'd*;

I ſay, theſe, and ſuch like *odde* things, may with the greateſt probability be reſolv'd into the *Conduct* and *Menages* of thoſe *inviſible Superviſors*, that preſide over, and govern our affairs.

But if they ſo far concern themſelves in our matters, how is it that they appear *not to maintain a* viſible *and* confeſt correſpondence *with ſome of the* better Mortals, *who are moſt fitted for their Communications and their influence?* To which I have ſaid ſome *things* already, when I accounted for the *unfrequency* of *Apparitions*; and I *now add* what I intend for another return to the main Objection, *viz.*

(2.) That the *apparition* of *good* Spirits is not *needful* for the Deſignes of the better World, whatever ſuch may be for the intereſt of the other. For we have had the *Appearance* and *Cohabitation* of the *Son* of *God*, we have *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, and the continued *influence* of the *Spirit*, the *greateſt Arguments* to ſtrengthen *Faith*, the moſt *powerful Motives* to excite our *Love*, and the *Nobleſt Encouragements* to quicken and raiſe our *deſires* and *hopes*, any of which are more than the *apparition* of an *Angel*; which would indeed be a great *gratification* of the *Animal Life*, but 'twould render our *Faith* leſs noble and leſs generous, were it frequently ſo aſſiſted: *Bleſſed are they that believe, and yet have*

not

not ſeen. Beſides which, the *good Angels* have no ſuch *ends* to proſecute, as the gaining any Vaſſals to ſerve them, they being *miniſtring Spirits* for our *good*, and no *ſelf-deſigners* for a *proud* and *inſolent Dominion* over us. And it may be perhaps not impertinently added, That *they* are not always *evil Spirits* that *appear*, as is, I know not well upon what grounds, generally imagined; but that the extraordinary *detections* of *Murders*, *latent Treaſures*, *falſified* and *unfulfill'd Bequeſts*, which are ſometimes made by *Apparitions*, may be the courteous Diſcoveries of the better, and more benign *Genii.* Yea, 'tis not unlikely, that thoſe *Warnings* that the World ſometimes hath of approaching *Judgments* and *Calamities* by *Prodigies*, and ſundry *odd Phænomena*, are the *kind Informations* of ſome of the Inhabitants of the upper World. Thus, was *Jeruſalem* forewarned before its ſacking by *Antiochus*, by thoſe *Aiery Horſemen* that were ſeen through all the City, for almoſt forty days together, 2 *Mac.* V. ii, iii. And the other *Prodigious Portents* that fore-ran its Deſtruction by *Titus*: which I mention, becauſe they are *notorious* inſtances. And though, for mine own part, I ſcorn the *ordinary Tales* of *Prodigies*, which proceed from *ſuperſtitious fears*, and *unacquaintance* with *Nature*, and have been uſed to bad purpoſes

poſes by the *Jealous* and the *Ignorant*; Yet I think that the Arguments that are brought by a late very ingenious Author, to conclude againſt ſuch Warnings and Predictions in the whole kind, are *ſhort* and *inconſequent*, and built upon too narrow *Hypotheſis*. For if it be ſuppoſed, that there is a ſort of Spirits over us, and about us, who can give a probable gueſs at the more *remarkable futurities*, I know not why it may not be conjectured, that the kindneſs they have for us, and the appetite of fore-telling ſtrange things, and the putting the World upon expectation, which we find is very grateful to our own Natures, may not incline them alſo to give us ſome general notice of thoſe uncommon Events which they foreſee. And I yet perceive no reaſon we have to phancy, that whatever is done in this kind, muſt needs be either *immediately* from *Heaven*, or from the *Angels* by *extraordinary commiſſion* and *appointment*. But it ſeems to me not unreaſonable to believe, that *thoſe officious Spirits*, that overſee our affairs, perceiving ſome *mighty and ſad alterations* at hand, in which their *Charge* is much concerned, cannot chuſe, by reaſon of their *affection* to us, but give us ſome *ſeaſonable hints* of thoſe *approaching Calamities*; to which alſo their natural deſire to *fore-tell ſtrange things* to come, may

contribute to incline them. And by this *Hypotheſis*, the *faireſt probabilities*, and *ſtrongeſt ratiotinations* againſt *Prodigies*, may be made unſerviceable. But this onely by the way. I proceed to the next Objection, which may be made to ſpeak thus:

(XII.) *The belief of* Witches, *and the wonderful things they are ſaid to perform by the help of the* Confederate Dæmon, *weakens our* Faith, *and expoſeth the World to* Infidelity *in the great matters of our Religion. For if* They *by Diabolical aſſiſtance, can* inflict *and* cure *Diſeaſes, and do things ſo much beyond the* comprehenſion *of our* Philoſophy, *and* activity *of common Nature; What aſſurance can we have, that the* Miracles *that confirm our Goſpel were not the effects of a Compact of like nature, and that* Devils *were not caſt out by* Beelzebub? *If* evil Spirits *can* aſſume *Bodies, and render themſelves* viſible *in* humane likeneſs; *What ſecurity can we have of the* reality *of the* Reſurrection *of* Chriſt? *And if, by their help,* Witches *can enter Chambers* inviſibly *through* Key-holes, *and little* unperceived Cranneys, *and* transform *themſelves at pleaſure; What Arguments of* Divinity *are there in our* Saviour's *ſhewing himſelf in the midſt of his* Diſciples, *when the Doors were* ſhut, *and his* Transfiguration *in the Mount?* Miracles *are the great inducements of*

Be-

Belief, and How shall we distinguish a Miracle *from a* Lying Wonder; *a* Testimony *from* Heaven, *from a* Trick *of the* Angels *of* Hell; *if they can perform things that astonish and confound our Reasons, and are beyond all the* Possibilities *of Humane Nature?* This *Objection* is spiteful and mischievous, but I thus endeavour to dispatch it.

(1.) The Wonders done by *Confederacy* with *wicked Spirits*, cannot derive a suspition upon the undoubted *Miracles* that were wrought by the Author & Promulgers of our Religion, as if *they* were performed by *Diabolical Compact*, since their *Spirit*, *Endeavours* and *Designes* were notoriously contrary to all the *Tendencies*, *Aims* and *Interests* of the *Kingdome* of *Darkness*. For, as to the Life and Temper of the Blessed and Adorable *JESUS*, we know there was an incomparable *sweetness* in his *Nature*, *Humility* in his *Manners*, *Calmness* in his *Temper*, *Compassion* in his *Miracles*, *Modesty* in his *Expressions*, *Holiness* in all his *Actions*, *Hatred* of *Vice* and *Baseness*, and *Love* to all the World; all which are *essentially contrary* to the Nature and Constitution of *Apostate Spirits*, who abound in *Pride* and *Rancour*, *Insolence* and *Rudeness*, *Tyranny* and *Baseness*, universal *Malice*, and *Hatred* of *Men*. And their *Designes* are as opposite, as

their *Spirit* and their *Genius*. And now, Can the *Sun* borrow its Light from the *bottomless Abyss*? Can *Heat* and *Warmth* flow in upon the World from the Regions of *Snow* and *Ice*? Can *Fire freeze*, and *Water burn*? Can Natures, so infinitely contrary, *communicate*, and jump in *projects*, that are *destructive* to each others *known Interests*? Is there any Balsome in the *Cockatrice's Egge*? or, Can the *Spirit* of *Life* flow from the *Venome* of the *Asp*? Will the *Prince* of *Darkness* strengthen the *Arm* that is *stretcht* out to pluck his *Usurp't Scepter*, and his *Spoyls* from him? And will he lend his *Legions*, to assist the *Armies* of his *Enemy* against him? No, these are impossible Supposals; No intelligent Being will industriously and knowingly contribute to the *Contradiction* of its own *Principles*, the *Defeature* of its *Purposes*, and the *Ruine* of its own deerest *Interests*. There is no fear *then*, that our Faith should receive prejudice from the *acknowledgment* of the *Being* of *Witches*, and *power* of *evil Spirits*, since 'tis not the *doing wonderful things* that is the onely *Evidence* that the *Holy JESUS* was from God, and his *Doctrine true*; but the *conjunction* of other circumstances, the *holiness* of his *Life*, the *reasonableness* of his *Religion*, and the *excellency* of his *Designes*, added credit to his Works, and strengthned the

great

great Concluſion, That he could be no other than the Son of God, and Saviour of the World. But beſides, I ſay,

(2.) That ſince *infinite Wiſdome* and *Goodneſs* rules the World, it cannot be conceiv'd, that they ſhould give up the greateſt part of men to *unavoidable deception.* And if *evil Angels*, by their *Confederates*, are permitted to perform ſuch *aſtoniſhing* things, as ſeem ſo evidently to carry *God's Seal* and *Power* with them, for the confirmation of *Falſhoods*, and gaining credit to *Impoſtors*, without any *counter-evidence* to diſabuſe the World; Mankind is expoſed to *ſad* and *fatal deluſion.* And to ſay that *Providence* will ſuffer us to be deceived in things of the greateſt concernment, when we uſe the beſt of our care and endeavours to prevent it, is to ſpeak hard things of *God*; and in effect to affirm, That He hath nothing to do in the Government of the World, or doth not concern Himſelf in the affairs of poor forlorn Men. And if the *Providence* and *Goodneſs* of God be not a ſecurity unto us againſt ſuch *Deceptions*, we cannot be aſſured, but that we are always abuſed by thoſe *miſchievous Agents*, in the *Objects* of *plain ſenſe*, and in all the matters of our dayly Converſes. If *ONE* that pretends he is *immediately* ſent from *God*, to overthrow the ancient *Fabrick* of Eſtabliſhed

Worſhip,

Worship, and to erect a *New Religion* in *His* Name; shall be *born* of a *Virgin*, and honour'd by a *miraculous Star*; proclaimed by a *Song* of seeming *Angels* of *Light*, and *Worshipped* by the *wise Sages* of the World; Revered by those of the greatest *austerity*, and *admired* by all for a *miraculous Wisdome*, beyond his *Education* and his *Years*: If He shall *feed Multitudes* with almost *nothing*, and *fast himself* beyond all the *possibilities* of Nature: If He shall be *transformed* into the *appearance* of *extraordinary Glory*, and converse with departed *Prophets* in their *visible Forms*: If He shall Cure all Diseases without *Physick* or *Endeavour*, and raise the *Dead* to *Life* after they have *stunk* in their *Graves*: If He shall be honoured by *Voyces* from *Heaven*, and attract the universal *Wonder* of Princes and People: If he shall *allay Tempests* with a *Beck*, and cast out *Devils* with a *Word*: If He shall fore-tell his own Death particularly, with its *Tragical Circumstances*, and his *Resurrection* after it: If the *Veil* of the most Famous *Temple* in the World shall be *rent*, and the *Sun darkened* at his *Funeral*: If He shall, within the time foretold, break the bonds of Death, and lift up his Head out of the Grave: If *Multitudes* of other *departed Souls* shall *arise* with *Him*, to attend at the *Solemnity* of *His Resurrection*: If He shall after

after Death, *viſibly converſe* with, *eat* and *drink* with, divers perſons, who could not be deceived in a matter of *clear ſenſe*, and *aſcend* in Glory in the preſence of an aſtoniſht and admiring Multitude: I ſay, if ſuch a One as this ſhould prove a *Diabolical Impoſtor*, and Providence ſhould permit him to be ſo credited and acknowledged; What poſſibility were there then for us to be aſſured, that we are not always *deceived*? yea, that our very Faculties were not given us onely to delude and abuſe us? And if ſo, the next Concluſion is, *That there is no God that judgeth in the Earth*; and the beſt, and moſt likely *Hypotheſis* will be, *That the World is given up to the Government of the Devils.* But if there be a *Providence* that ſuperviſeth us, (as nothing is more certain) doubtleſs, it will never ſuffer poor helpleſs Creatures to be *inevitably deceived*, by the *craft* and *ſubtilty* of their *miſchievous Enemy*, to their undoing; but will without queſtion take ſuch care, that the *works* wrought by *Divine Power* for the Confirmation of *Divine Truth*, ſhall have ſuch *viſible Marks* and *Signatures*, if not in their *Nature*, yet in their *Circumſtances*, *Ends* and *Deſignes*, as ſhall diſcover *whence they are*, and ſufficiently *diſtinguiſh* them from all *Impoſtures* and *Deluſions*. And though wicked Spirits may perform ſome ſtrange things

things that may excite wonder for a while, yet *He hath*, and *will* so provide, that they shall be *baffled and discredited*; as we know it was in the case of *Moses* and the *Ægyptian Magicians*.

Now, besides what I have directly said to the *Objection*, I have this to adde to the *Objectors*, That I could wish they would take care of such *Suggestions*; which, if they overthrow not the Opinion they oppose, will dangerously affront the Religion they would seem to acknowledge. For he that saith, *That if there are* WITCHES, *there is no way to prove that* Christ Jesus *was not a Magician, and Diabolical Impostor*; puts a *deadly* Weapon into the *hands* of the *Infidel*, and is himself next door to the *SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST*: of which, in *order* to the *perswading* greater *tenderness* and *caution* in such matters, I *give* this short account.

The *Sin* against the *Holy Ghost* is said to be *Unpardonable*; by which *sad* Attribute, and the Discourse of our *Saviour*, *Mat.* XII. from the xxii. to the xxxiii *ver.* we may *understand* its Nature: In order to which we consider, That since the *Mercies* of *God*, and the *Merits* of his *Son*, are *infinite*, there is nothing can make a Sin *unpardonable*, but what makes it *incurable*; and there is no Sin but what is curable by a *strong Faith*,

Faith, and a *vigorus Endeavour*: *For all things are poſſible to him that believeth.* So that, *that* which makes a Sin *incurable*, muſt be ſomewhat that makes *Faith impoſſible*, and obſtructs all means of Conviction. In order to the finding *which*, we muſt conſider the ways and methods the Divine Goodneſs hath taken for the begetting *Faith*, and *cure* of *Infidelity*: which it attempted, firſt, by the Prophets, and holy men of antient times; who, by the *excellency* of their *Doctrine*, the *greatneſs* of their *Miracles*, and the *holineſs* of their *Lives*, endeavoured the conviction and reformation of a ſtubborn and unbelieving World. But though *Few believed their report*, and men would not be prevail'd on by what they *did*, or what they *ſaid*, yet their *Infidelity* was not hitherto *incurable*, becauſe further *means* were provided in the *Miniſtry* of *John* the *Baptiſt*, whoſe Life was more *ſevere*, whoſe Doctrines were more plain, preſſing and particular; and therefore 'twas poſſible that He might have ſucceeded. Yea, and where He failed, and could not open mens hearts and their eyes, the Effect was ſtill in *poſſibility*, and *it* might be expected from *Him* that came after, to whom the *Prophets* and *John* were but the *Twilight* and the *Dawn*. And though *His miraculous Birth*, the *Song* of *Angels*, the *Journey* of

the *Wise Men* of the *East*, and the *correspondence* of *Propheſies*, with the *Circumſtances* of the *firſt appearance* of the *Wonderful Infant*: I ſay, though theſe had not been taken notice of, yet was there a further proviſion made for the *cure* of *Infidelity*, in his *aſtoniſhing Wiſdom*, and moſt *excellent Doctrines*; For, *He ſpake as never Man did.* And when *Theſe* were deſpiſed and neglected, yet there were other *means* towards *Conviction*, and *Cure* of *Unbelief*, in thoſe mighty *Works* that bore Teſtimony of *Him*, and ware the evident marks of *Divine Power* in their foreheads. But when after all, theſe *clear* and *unqueſtionable Miracles* which were wrought by the *Spirit* of *God*, and had eminently his *Superſcription* on them, ſhall be aſcribed to the *Agency* of *evil Spirits*, and *Diabolical Compact*, as they were by the *malicious* and *ſpightful Phariſees* in the periods above-mentioned; when thoſe *great* and *laſt Teſtimonies* againſt *Infidelity*, ſhall be ſaid to be but the *Tricks* of *Sorcery*, and *Complotment* with *Helliſh Confederates*, *This* is *Blaſphemy* in the higheſt, againſt the *Power* and *Spirit* of *God*, and *ſuch* as *cuts* off all *means* of *Conviction*, and puts the Unbeliever beyond all *poſſibilities* of *Cure*. For *Miracles* are God's *Seal*, and the great and laſt evidence of the truth of any Doctrine. And though, while *theſe* are onely diſbe-

believed as to the *Fact*, there remains a *possibility* of *perswasion*; yet, when the *Fact* shall be acknowledg'd, but the Power *blasphemed*, and the effects of the adorable *Spirit maliciously* imputed to the *Devils*; such a *Blasphemy*, such an *Infidelity* is *incurable*, and consequently *unpardonable*. I say, in sum, the Sin against the Holy Ghost seems to be a *malicious imputation* of the *Miracles* wrought by the *Spirit* of God in our Saviour to *Satanical Confederacy*, and the power of *Apostate Spirits*; Than which, nothing is more *blasphemous*, and nothing is more like to provoke the *Holy Spirit* that is so abused to an *Eternal Derelict*ion of so *Vile* and so *Incurable* an Unbeliever.

This account, as 'tis clear and reasonable in it self, so it is plainly lodg'd in the mention'd Discourse of our Saviour. And those that speak other things about it, seem to me to talk at randome, and perfectly without book. But to leave them to the fondness of their own conceits, I think it now time to draw up to a Conclusion of the whole.

Therefore briefly, Sir, I have endeavoured in these Papers, which my respect and your concernment in the subject have made *yours*, to remove the main prejudices I could think of, against the existence of *Witches* and *Apparitions*:

and I'm sure I have suggested much more against what I defend, than ever I heard or saw in any that opposed it; whose Discourses, for the most part, have seemed to me inspired by a *lofty scorn* of *common* belief, and some *trivial Notions* of *Vulgar Philosophy*. And in despising the *Common Faith* about matters of *Fact*, and fondly adhering to *it* in things of *Speculation*, they very grosly and absurdly mistake: For in things of *Fact*, the *People* are as much to be believ'd as the most *subtile Philosophers* and *Speculators*; since here, *Sense* is the Judge. But in matters of *Notions* and *Theory*, *They* are not at all to be heeded, because *Reason* is to be Judge of *these*, and *this* they know not how to use. And yet thus it is with those *wise* Philosophers, that will deny the *plain* evidence of the *Senses* of Mankind, because they cannot reconcile *appearances* with the fond Crotchets of a Philosophy which they lighted on in the *High-way* by *chance*, and will adhere to at *adventure*. So that I profess, for mine own part, I never yet heard any of the confident Declaimers against *Witchcraft* and *Apparitions*, speak any thing that might move a mind, in any degree instructed in the generous kinds of *Philosophy*, and *Nature* of *things*. And for the *Objections* I have recited, they are such as rise out of mine own thoughts,

which

which I obliged to consider what was possible to be said upon this *occasion*. For though I have examined *Scot's Discovery*, phancying that there I should find the *strong reasons* of *mens* dis-belief in this matter; yet I profess I met not with the least suggestion in all that *Farrago*, but what it had been ridiculous for me to have gone about to *answer*: For the Author doth little but tell *odd Tales*, and *silly Legends*, which he confutes and laughs at, and pretends *this* to be a *Confutation* of the Being of *Witches* and *Apparitions*: In all which, His *Reasonings* are *trifling* and *Childish*; and when He ventures at *Philosophy*, He is little better than *absurd*: So that 'twill be a Wonder to me, if any but *Boys* and *Buffoons* imbibe any *Prejudices* against a Belief so infinitely Confirmed, from the *Loose* and *Impotent Suggestions* of so weak a Discourser.

And now, Sir, 'tis fit that I relieve your patience; and I shall do so, when I have said, that *You* can abundantly *prove*, what I have but attempted to *defend*: And that among the many Obligations your *Country* hath to you, for the *Wisdome* and *Diligence* of your Endeavours in its service; your *Ingenious Industry* for the *Detecting* of those *Vile Practicers*,

is

is not the least *considerable.* To which I will add no more, but the *Confession* who it is that hath given you all this trouble; which I know you are ready to *pardon*, to the respect and good *Intentions* of

SIR,

Your Affectionate and Obliged

Honourer and Servant,

J. G.

Advertiſements of ſome Books printed for and ſold by James Collins *at his Shop in* Weſtminſter-*Hall*, 1667.

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A Sermon preached before the Peers in the *Abby*-Church at *Weſtminſter*, upon the 10th of *October*, 1666. being a Faſt ordered by His Majeſtie, in Conſideration of the late Dreadful Fire, that conſumed the greater part of the City of *London*, by *Seth* Lord Biſhop of *Exon.* in 4°.